

CONTRA COSTA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

I. DEPARTMENT MANDATE AND MISSION

A. MANDATE

Established by legislative authority, the Child Support Enforcement Program was authorized under Title IV-D of the Social Security Act to provide services assisting parents to meet their mutual obligation to support their children. Established in 1975, the program is a joint Federal, State and local partnership involving separate state systems, each with its own unique laws and procedures.

In California, child support reform legislation signed in 1999 by Governor Davis created the Department of Child Support Services in January 2000. The new department is directed to provide leadership and oversight to develop a statewide automation system while ensuring uniformity of services for families throughout the State. Every county has a local child support agency providing child support services on behalf of the State of California. The Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) is the Contra Costa County agency responsible for providing child support services and enforcement.

No-cost services to Contra Costa County residents with physical custody of a minor include:

- Establishing paternity
- Locating parents
- Establishing court orders for paternity, child and medical support
- Enforcing court orders for child, family, and medical support
- Collecting and distributing support payments
- Maintaining accounts of payments paid and payment due
- Modifying court orders when appropriate

B. MISSION STATEMENT

The Contra Costa County Department of Child Support Services promotes the well being of children and the self-sufficiency of families by delivering effective child support services to help meet the financial, medical and emotional needs of children.

II. MAJOR DESCRIPTIONS OF DEPARTMENT FUNCTIONS AND DATA

BUDGET \$21,830,126

FTE: 231

In 2001, Contra Costa County was among the first in California to transition from a Family Support Bureau administered by the District Attorney's office to a local, independent Department of Child Support Services under the state umbrella.

Contra Costa County's Department of Child Support Services is committed to delivering outstanding service using state-of-the-art technology and customer service practices in collection activities. Each functional area of the department is composed of several teams of specialists all interfacing to deliver seamless customer service.

The five department functional areas are responsible for a wide range of duties. Budget figures for each reflect salary and benefit costs as well as operating costs to perform required department duties.

A. ADMINISTRATION

Administrative Support
Management
Information Systems
Training

Administration is responsible for overall department management related to personnel issues, operations, program compliance, contracts, purchasing, payroll, facilities, information systems and training. It monitors training of new staff, ensures updates on new policies and procedures, and tracking and resolving complaints within required timeframes.

B. FISCAL OPERATIONS

Fiscal Operations activates new orders out of court, performs account adjustments and audits, terminates collections and works funds "held in suspense" until the issue delaying distribution of the funds is resolved by refund or application to an account. It processes payments, handles journal vouchers and suspense refunds, title company demands and stop payments.

C. PUBLIC SERVICE

Public Service handles the initial contact with visitors, receives and processes child support payments, receives and tracks initial case referrals, collects, secures, and confirms information and routes for next appropriate action. Two phone teams take all initial and follow-up action necessary to resolve callers' issues.

D. LEGAL/ESTABLISHMENT

Legal/Establishment performs all functions related to establishing and activating child support orders including establishing paternity by genetic testing. This includes verifying information required to open cases, calculating the amount of financial and/or medical support to be collected and distributed, and processing supplemental summons and complaints when circumstances have changed. Attorneys are available for court appearances, legal opinions or legal interpretations for staff. Additional responsibilities include preparation of court documents, ensuring proof of service notifying an individual to appear in court, maintaining notice of motions and post court maintenance.

E. ENFORCEMENT

Enforcement handles all actions on child support cases with established orders. This may involve registration of foreign orders, activating accounts with out-of-state orders, and locating assets. Functions also include notice of motions, processing summons and complaints and amending proposed and default judgments. Additional responsibilities involve processing dismissals, filing and executing in-house stipulations, which are agreements made out of court with non-custodial parties, and addressing other issues related to established cases. Each year the department undergoes an intensive monitoring process reviewing 288 cases randomly selected by the state to ensure that the department is in compliance with all state and federal regulations.

F. DEPARTMENT DATA

BUDGET: \$ 21,830,126

FTE: 231

OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORY	FILLED POSITIONS
Officials and Administrators	3
Professionals	25
Technicians	82
Paraprofessionals	1
Administrative Support	120
Total Filled Positions as of 12/31/02	231

EHTNICITY	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	PERCENT
WHITE	15	125	140	60.6%
BLACK	5	28	33	14.3%
HISPANIC	4	19	23	10.0%
ASIAN	5	9	14	6.1%
PACIFIC ISLAND	0	1	1	0.4%
FILIPINO	6	10	16	6.9%
AMER INDIAN	1	3	4	1.7%
TOTAL	36	195	231	100%
	15.58%	84.42%	100%	

III. DEPARTMENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A. BASED ON LAST YEAR'S CHALLENGES

DCSS passed the State Child Support Compliance Review for 2002. The California Department of Child Support Services and Local Child Support Agencies are required by state and federal statutes to review the operation of the Child Support Enforcement Program in the State annually. The state ties county compliance to eligibility for state incentive funding. A cross section of two hundred eighty-seven randomly selected DCSS cases were audited.

In November 2002, DCSS became the first Child Support Services Department in the State and the first County department to accept credit card payments online. Non-custodial parents can pay child support anytime on a secured network. Payments are automatically credited by established priorities. DCSS abandoned its goal to provide secure on-line access to account information with notification that it would convert from the BEST to the CASES Automated Child Support Computer System. Conversion will bring the state closer to compliance with the mandate to provide a statewide automated system.

An aggressive recruitment process generated a large pool of qualified applicants for 76 child support specialist openings and new management positions. Recognizing that the majority of DCSS management will retire within the next five to ten years, three individuals were hired to manage public service, legal/establishment and enforcement functions. Although DCSS case load requirements warranted hiring 76 additional child support specialists, budget constraints limited hiring to 22.

Phone Pro's Tele-Service Training for the Call Center Phone Teams' child support specialists resulted in better case management, improved collections, productivity, and customer service.

In 2001, over one-third of the DCSS cases coming before the court commissioner involved East County residents. Since May 2002, the Pittsburg court calendars DCSS cases every Wednesday afternoon giving East County residents improved access to services.

The nationally recognized partnership between DCSS and Rubicon Programs Inc. helps non-custodial fathers navigate child support enforcement with equitable payment arrangements. Program participation has increased as a result of newspaper, television and other community outreach highlighting the program's success.

Workshops and resource materials including video tapes of the Paternity Opportunity Program (POPs) and "Making It to and Through Family Court"

created good will and improved access to DCSS services for staff from Contra Costa County hospital birthing units, Welcome Home Baby, STAND Against Domestic Violence and others. The Walnut Creek Chapter of the California Applicant Attorneys Association learned when and why liens are filed and the correct procedures to follow.

The department installed multi-media and video conferencing sites with ISDN and TCP/IP links allowing DCSS to be virtually present throughout the County. Clerical support staff, working from their desks, supply critical information to DCSS attorneys in the East County court. They also monitor NCP services at Rubicon and the six Contra Costa County EASTBAY Works One-Stop Career Centers.

The partnership with the Contra Costa County Bar Association and Superior Court produced a Spanish “Making It to and Through Family Court” video. The program will begin airing monthly in January 2003 on CCTV. Complimentary videos will be distributed to community agencies.

B. TECHNOLOGY IMPROVED CUSTOMER SERVICE AND REDUCED COSTS

An upgraded document imaging system, installed in the fall of 2002, significantly improved the speed of processing child support payments. Before Disc Image, a payment processor could expect to process between 75 – 125 payments per day. With the initial Disc Image program, installed in March 1998, processors handled 100-150 payments per day. The new Disc Image allows the payment-processing group to handle 200 – 250 payments per day. As a result, the team, reduced from eight to four, still processes 2,000 more payments per month than were processed one year ago.

Access to forms from the DCSS website provides ease of access to clients and a significant savings in staff time, printing and mailing costs. The third most downloaded form on the County’s website is the DCSS application for service. Several other forms are also available.

A new Interactive Voice Response system (IVR) was installed in August. Available 24/7, clients calling the main or toll-free number listen to options and enter their Case ID to access case payment or court appearance information. The IVR handled over 16,000 calls freeing child support specialists to handle more complex issues.

The newly developed Audit Workbook is the solution for DCSS new “paperless” system. The “cradle to grave” program accommodates up to 35 years of case history, including all court orders, support orders, payments, liabilities, interest rates, and end of year totals. Records are readily accessed and updated in court by DCSS attorneys and support

staff. Featured at the State Child Support Convention in February, the process is being implemented by thirteen other California counties.

C. CUSTOMER SERVICE INITIATIVES IMPLEMENTED OR IMPROVED

Prior to 2001 no calls were answered and wait for a call back could take two to three days. The first priority for the new department was to install more phone lines, an automated call distribution (ACD) system and to create a call center with highly trained staff able to take immediate action on issues.

Service level and percent of calls handled by the automated call distribution system (ACD), installed in 2001, have risen dramatically, despite a steady increase in daily call volume. Two Call Center teams, each composed of eight child support specialists and two leads, alternate days of coverage. The average number of calls per day rose to 350 in 2002 compared to 250 per day in 2001. Child support specialists are answering an average of 7,000 calls per month. Average wait time for calls continues to drop with an average of 10 ½ minutes overall in 2002 and a drop to 4 minutes 25 seconds in December.

The new IVR handles an average 16,000 additional calls per month not requiring staff assistance. The IVR gives personalized payment and court date information while the ACD provides general information on driving directions, business hours, payment, website, and genetic testing.

The average number of persons dropping in to the department for services grew from 716 per month the last half of 2001 to 816 per month during 2002. In spite of the increased volume and lack of additional staff, lobby wait time has steadily declined.

In October 2001, DCSS became the first Child Support Services Department in the state to offer the option of electronic deposits of child support into bank accounts. In its first year, 50% of support payments collected were directly deposited into custodial parties' bank accounts. In July 2002, custodial parties with e-mail access were notified the day funds were transferred to their accounts instead of waiting for notice by mail or calling DCSS.

DCSS continues to expand website services. Clients and employers may download forms, access frequently asked questions, link to other Informational websites, and e-mail questions and suggestions to DCSS 24/7.

The partnership with the Contra Costa County Bar Association and Superior Court produced a Spanish "Making It to and Through Family

Court” video. The program will begin airing monthly in January 2003 on CCTV. Complimentary videos will be distributed to community agencies.

The Board of Supervisors was introduced to the new department, new technologies, processes and challenges during presentations for Child Support Awareness Month and the Annual Budget Review. Elected officials’ staff learned about department functions, services and contacts for specific constituency issues during a reception and tour.

Well attended, the second Employer Workshop produced on-going support materials such as frequently asked questions and a guide for calculating child support.

The second Customer Satisfaction Survey was conducted in 2002, a year after installation of the new telephone inquiry system, implementation of new processes and sixty hours of customer service training for staff. Custodial parties and non-custodial parents evaluated services and staff prior to the establishment of the new department and after. Key findings from 75 respondents in each of the two groups included the following:

- 14% average increase in “very satisfied” across all areas
- 19% increase “very satisfied” with DCSS personnel
- 19% increase “very satisfied” with staff taking responsibility to resolve issues
- 17% increase “very satisfied” with the telephone inquiry process

According to Williams and Associates, “Rarely in our combined fifty years of survey work, do we see such strong findings from a survey of the general population.”

Ombuds act as advocates for the state’s formal complaint resolution process implemented in July 2001. In 2002, DCSS received 151 inquiries ranging from complaints about court orders, balances, and paternity issues to general questions on their case. Only 14 formal complaints were filed and 2 forwarded to the formal State Hearing Process.

D. TRAINING STRENGTHENS DEPARTMENT SYSTEMS AND PERFORMANCE

In the first half of 2002, forty-one personnel attended various outside conferences and trainings. Budget constraints prohibited additional outside training for the last half of the year.

External trainers included the Franchise Tax Board, Disc Image, Comp USA and Knowledge Point Performance Appraiser. DCSS staff expertise from attorneys, clerics, child support officers, and supervisors

supplemented an aggressive training team schedule to keep staff on the cutting edge of new technology and processes.

E. COMMUNITY SERVICE AND CHARITABLE GIVING

For each of the past four years, the department has received press coverage for the “Baby Shower” benefiting County hospital. Funds from rummage sales, Easter candy sales and the Amazing Race as well as donated baby clothes for newborns and teddy bears for children undergoing surgery help the hospital provide for needy families.

The Food From the Bar Annual Food Drive filled 4 barrels and raised \$878 while the Holiday Food Drive collected 619 pounds of food.

DCSS teams participating in the Probation Department’s Annual Trivia Contest help raise funds for Contra Costa County youth.

IV. DEPARTMENT CHALLENGES

A. INTERNAL TO DEPARTMENT

1. Maintain high case management performance levels to meet the Quality Assurance Program Improvement (QAPI) standards set by the state to achieve the mandated Federal Performance Measures.
2. Manage the state mandated conversion from the BEST to the CASES Automated Child Support System.
3. Achieve a paperless operation by the end of 2003.
4. Integrate intake and establishment functions into a single case origination unit to establish court orders more quickly.
5. Implement processes to electronically file documents with Superior Court, electronically file liens with the Clerk-Recorder’s Office, and accept electronic transfer of payments from employers by the end of 2003 to ensure and expedite document delivery while reducing processing costs and time.
6. Maintain current customer service levels despite static staffing and increasing demand for services.
7. Continue to develop next-generation leadership to replace managers expecting to retire within the next five to ten years.

8. Expand video conferencing and recording capability allowing staff to participate in state workgroups and training. Use videotapes and other resources to train staff.
9. Establish a clerical phone team unit to handle and process custodial party inquiries.
10. Transition to a single department phone system.

B. INTERNAL TO THE COUNTY

1. The department is responsible and accountable to the state by legislative authority to provide child support services. DCSS' success is directly related to its effectiveness in promoting parental responsibility to meet the financial, medical and emotional needs of Contra Costa County's children. DCSS will continue to develop and strengthen partnerships and use other creative methods to expand community education with minimal impact on department resources.
2. DCSS will continue to expand and improve contacts with other County departments and organizations to more effectively reach and serve non-custodial parents. Memorandums of understanding to share training and resources will be explored.

C. EXTERNAL TO COUNTY OPERATION

1. Converting from the BEST to the CASES Automated Child Support System in early 2004 will enhance DCSS' ability to interface with other child support offices in the state and improve case management. The conversion will bring the State closer to compliance with a federal mandate for one state wide automated child support system.
2. Budgetary and staffing limitations continue to impact immediate and long term planning to meet state and federally mandated Performance measures. Plans to expand fulltime employees from 209 to 273 in 2002 did not occur. If the legislature acts upon the report from the State Legislative Analyst's Office to allocate funds based upon caseload and performance measures, DCSS staffing levels could improve.
3. A variety of outreach programs such as participation in the County fair, city farmers' markets, school teen outreach programs, and educational health fairs are no longer possible due to funding and staff limitations.

4. The unemployment rate directly impacts our ability to collect child support and places stress on families during times of economic uncertainty.

V. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

A. FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR – WORKLOAD DATA

	<u>2000 - 01</u>	<u>2001 - 02</u>	<u>2002 – 03</u> <u>Estimated</u>	<u>2003 – 04</u> <u>Estimated</u>
Collections distributed (SFY)	\$50,393,879	\$52,913,573	\$55,559,251	\$56,000,000
Cases with support orders	70.99%	74.54%	80.7%	80.7%
Collections on current support	68.83%	72.27%	62.0%	62.0%
Collections on arrears	60.26%	63.27%	57.3%	58.3%
Proof of Paternity (unwed births)	90.44%	91.34%	87.0%	87.0%

B. OUTCOME INDICATORS

	<u>2000 - 01</u>	<u>2001 - 02</u>	<u>2002 – 03</u> <u>Estimated</u>	<u>2003 – 04</u> <u>Estimated</u>
Electronic funds transfer (% payments)	0	35%	38%	40%
Payment windows (payments received)	149	249.5	249	249
Online credit card payment	N/A	N/A	100	500
Lobby wait in minutes	55	16.7	11	11
Phones (speed of answer)	2 - 3 days	11.1 min. *	8.5 min.	6 min.

In December 2002, non-custodial parents were able to pay child support by credit card online.

* Prior to August 31, 2001, phone response time averaged 2-3 days. After the automated phone distribution system was activated at the end of August 2001, speed of response dropped dramatically.

Dept. of Child Support Services

3/12/03



